

# Fightback

*Struggle, Solidarity, Socialism*

THE



YOUTH

ISSUE



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# Contents

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*Fightback* magazine is now in its 20th year as we continue the long-term fight for socialism. Readers and supporters may consider remembering us in their will with assets or money that will help the struggle in the long-term. If this is you please put in your will 'Fightback, PO Box 10-282, Dominion Road, Auckland 1446, as well as what you would like to leave to us.'

---

### 3 Editorial

---

---

### 4 #activism

---

---

### 7 African Young People and The Battle of Colonialism

---

---

### 10 Teenage Girls, Language, Social Media, Activism and Survival

---

---

### 12 Decolonisation Love Song

---

---

### 14 Whose Future Is It? Xenophobia and Nationalism on the Left

---

---

### 16 WHAT DO YOU DO // OUTSIDE OF THIS

---

---

### 18 Beyond the Ballot Box

---

---

### 20 We Can Go Further: Alternatives to Our Political System

---

# Editorial

E ngā mana, e ngā reo e ngā karangarangatanga maha, tēnā koutou.

Welcome to the Youth Issue of Fightback Magazine, Redefining Activism.

There is a well-known whakatauki (Māori proverb) that says: 'Ko te mahi a te tamariki, he wāwāhi tahā.'

This is often understood as meaning that the activities of children break the calabashes (gourds, liquid vessels). Some say that it is the very job of young people to test the values and beliefs of their past and present. That those broken calabashes are not always misguided mistakes, but a conscious and significant moment of clarity. A question; a prompt, a challenge to one's surroundings. Fresh eyes on old ways, a possibility of a new vision.

As a teenager, I could count on one hand the adults in my life who were open to peering through those cracks in the gourds. Sitting with me amid the broken pieces and unanswered questions. Unafraid to have challenging conversations, and consider how strange society can look to the young. The unwritten rules of justice/injustice that you don't find in a school book but you see and feel in the playground. Past the most frustrating phrase - 'it's just the way it is' and towards 'what will make this better?'

This issue is an attempt to capture both the wisdom and the challenge presented by young people, who are already engaging within community, activism, ideas and politics. As a 26 year old, I asked four young people under 25 to help guide the direction of this issue. Their kaupapa included ideas such as:

Asking the questions: what do we see as "real" or "legitimate" activism and why?

How do we challenge negative narratives around youth activism?

Why are older activists so cynical about youth activism and the future of activism in Aotearoa?

At the core of this issue is searching for a redefinition of activism. To do this we are looking at narratives of survival and resistance by youth under capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy, and homophobia/transphobia/biphobia/interphobia. We want to challenge the idea that youth are disaffected and show the ways in which they are transforming activism in Aotearoa.

This issue features eight pieces by people under the age of 25 on the topics of: the activist tradition in Aotearoa, decolonisation, colonialism, xenophobia, sexism, sex work, voting and what alternatives look like to our current political systems. This isn't a silent peering through the cracks in the calabashes, this is an unashamed explosion. It is a multitude of thought out, planned out, felt out wero to not just our current political structures, but often, the existing forms that resist them as well. And still, these whakaaro, are only the tip of an iceberg, in a churning sea of discontent as we inherit the rising tides, global crises, swelling inequalities and deep poverty in this century.

So this issue is in essence, a challenge. The calabashes are broken, but their shards are a cause for conversation, for action, and for change. Will you sit with us and envision a new world? Will you stand with us and fight for it?

Ngā mihi aroha, in solidarity and with love,

**Kassie Hartendorp**  
Editing Team Coordinator

Massive thank you to the awesome editing team: Huriana Kopeke-Te Aho, Aaliyah Zionov, Mui Sim Weeber and Hugo Cordue.

## About Fightback

Under our current system, democracy consists of a vote every 3 years. Most of our lives are lived under dictatorship, the dictatorship of bosses and WINZ case managers. Fightback stands for a system in which our workplaces, our schools, our universities are run democratically, for social need rather than private profit.

Fightback participates in the MANA Movement, whose stated mission is to bring "rangatiratanga to the poor, the powerless and the dispossessed." Capitalism was imposed in Aotearoa through colonisation, and the fight for indigenous self-determination is intimately connected with the fight for an egalitarian society. We also maintain an independent Marxist organisation outside of parliament, to offer a vision of a world beyond the parliamentary capitalist system.

Fightback stands against all forms of oppression. We believe working-class power, the struggle of the majority for self-determination, is the basis for ending all forms of oppression. However, we also recognise that daily inequities such as sexism must be addressed here and now, not just after the revolution.

Fightback is embedded in a range of struggles on the ground; including building a fighting trade union movement, movements for gender and sexual liberation, and anti-racism.

Fightback also publishes a monthly magazine, and a website, to offer a socialist perspective on ongoing struggles.

Fightback stands for struggle, solidarity and socialism.

## Fightback

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### Youth Editing Team

Huriana Kopeke-Te Aho, Aaliyah Zionov,  
Mui Sim Weeber and Hugo Cordue

### Editing Team Coordinator

Kassie Hartendorp

### Supporting Editors

Ian Anderson, Daphne Lawless

### Proofreading

Joe McClure, Bronwen Beechey

### Illustrations

Kassie Hartendorp, Huriana Kopeke-Te Aho  
Photo courtesy of No Pride in Prisons.

### Layout

Michael Durey

# #activism

*Brent Tinkle is a Wellington local in his second year of his Bachelors of Social Work at Whitireia Community Polytechnic in Porirua.*

What do we see as real or legitimate activism and why? How do we challenge negative narratives around youth activism? Why are older activists so cynical about youth activism and the future of activism in Aotearoa?

Activism comes from the Latin word *actus*, meaning 'to act, deed, to drive through'. I like to break activism down into 'act' and 'vision' – acting to change what you envision to be better for society.

Activism has its own unique history in New Zealand, a history changed forever by people of mana who were steadfast, unapologetically radical and passionate. Whina Cooper launched Te Rōpu o te Matakite o Aotearoa and led the Māori Land March in 1975. Between 1975 and 1978, Eva Rickard led the campaign for the return of the Raglan Golf Club to Māori ownership. In 1977, Joe Hawke led the occupation of Bastion Point reserve, a protest against the sale of land that had been wrongfully taken from Ngāti Whātua.

Tame Iti, whom the media has smeared, burned and twisted, still stands unfaltering. Hone Harawira spent his youth passionately rallying with

Auckland based groups including He Taua and the Polynesian Panthers. The 'Pātu Squad' as they were called, went toe-to-toe with the police's 'Redsquad' in the suburbs surrounding Mt Eden during the '81 Springbok tour protests.

These activists and the legacies of those who have fought injustice before them have inspired and encouraged Generation Y'ers to this date. As millennials, we produce our own methods. Often activism acts from outside the confines of the system because you can try to create change from within, but often being a conformist means the system ends up changing you. As activists, we must fight to change the system itself.

One thing is certain – we live in a complex world with ever-changing ways to acquire information. The age of the Internet allows global sharing of information to almost anyone and everyone who lives in a democratic state with access to a computer. The Internet has drastically decentralised and eroded power of traditional media within society. It has given ways for many outside the majority consensus to share their views and opinions. With mobile phone recording, images and videos of events hit the web every minute.

*The internet has been a tool, not a cause of change. It has made it easier for people to see the truth that the powerful would rather hide, to learn from activists on the other side of the world, to co-ordinate campaigns without hierarchy and to expose governments and corporations to public ridicule. It has also helped those same governments and corporations to spy on activists, to disrupt campaigns, to spread their own messages through well-funded advertising and to create an illusion of popular support. (Hill, 2013, pg 6)*

In essence, it has provided an alternative means for Y-Gens being informed on current events. It provides sanctuary for those wishing to avoid the verbal diarrhoea that pours from Mike Hosking's mouth most weeknights on dumbed-down tax-payer funded mainstream media. There are those of earlier generations who are cynical about our use of the Internet, suggesting it hinders our ability to actively protest in person. They must be reminded that it is just a contextualised form of the printing press used in Britain in the 17th century – printing allowed for the mass distribution of information. It is the equivalent of anti-war pamphlets handed out on the streets during the Vietnam War. Now, activists have their own arsenal of techniques ranging from hashtags and tweets, to my personal favourite, the Internet 'meme'.



Many of New Zealand's working class are so concerned with surviving our society's capitalist system and putting food on the table that economic freedom and socialist democracy is unfortunately beyond their rationale. The first step for Generation Y activists should be to challenge the structural systems in place. A focal point should be to rally and engage with workplace unions. Through working in solidarity with unions, the goals of better work conditions, higher wages and job satisfaction can be achieved. A misconception is that millennials do not think favourably of unions but recent studies suggest the opposite to be true as highlighted in Frontes & Margolies (2010). This will not be easy, and historically the government has made sure of this. Evidence of this is the Waterfront Strikes of 1951, and the legislation the National Government put in place at the time that prohibited any citizen from aiding workers financially with fines as a punishment. The Labour opposition also have a tainted history with unions, making the Carpenters Union illegal in 1948 and the Boilmakers Union illegal in the 80's.

The major obstacle with young workers is that we now live in a society that fails to provide proper opportunities for workers to acquire union membership. Very few workplaces make it easy for millennials to find information or access appropriate unions. Activists should be working against such practice, highlighting the need for workers to unite and challenge their employers and unions to ask whether they wish to join. Through unions, it is imperative that the rights of

workers are met and that unions serve the goals of the employees. All activists who aim for a more equal society should join their appropriate union.

Another approach to activism should be the encouragement of collective and transparent communication between groups. An example could be feminist groups working alongside socialist organisations. It is understandable that feminists might be hesitant to work alongside groups that historically have side-lined their causes. Classism in its very essence facilitates sexism and racism; therefore, some common ground may be found. In doing so, socialists may also gain a better understanding of feminism and become more active in advocating for its cause.

Another example may be the plight of tangata whenua and New Zealand Cook Islanders. Many do not know that New Zealand Cook Islanders fall lower than tangata whenua in some statistics pertaining to poverty. By working alongside tangata whenua, they may have a stronger voice when asking for their fair share. If New Zealand is to treat its indigenous and rightful owners with contempt, how can it be accepted they will treat those from the Cook Islands any better.

Likewise, tangata whenua may benefit by extending its hands to our Pasifika brothers struggling for racial equality. Millennial activists should also have a greater understanding of Kaupapa Māori theory. Te Reo initiatives should also be supported and compulsory in every school across Aotearoa. It is one of New

Zealand's official languages, therefore should be treated as such. Activists should be encouraging each other to learn Te Reo Māori and challenging our society's European epistemology and the hegemonic forces that push its colonising consensus on iwi by doing so.

George Orwell said "Each generation imagines itself to be more intelligent than the one that went before it, and wiser than the one that comes after it." No doubt the generation that comes before us will read about how we as a society could have done more about certain events such as the West Papua Genocide, and think of us in a negative light. It is with hope that they too may forgive our ignorance and give us a chance to right our wrongs. Until then, the fight is ours and we must use our strengths to combat the neo-liberal agenda of the right. We must protest the systemically racist structure of institutions across Aotearoa. We must unionise, organise and resist. It will never be easy and at times you will have to work from outside the system. To the activists of older generations who look upon us millennials with disregard, the words of Huey P Newton should be remembered: "The revolution has always been in the hands of the young. The young always inherit the revolution."

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# African Young People and the Battle of Colonialism

*Joya Tiana is originally from the USA and currently resides in Sydney. She loves Wellington and visits often. Joya has been writing professionally since October 2015 and enjoys writing about food, travel, and socially impactful topics.*

“Colonialism deprives you of your self-esteem and to get it back you have to fight to redress the balance”. Although colonialism is seen as an act of the past, its harsh impact still carries on today. Many of today’s youth are still facing issues that have been brought on as an aftermath of colonialism and neocolonialism.

Colonialism is the state of a people or dependent nation in which the area and/or people, and often their resources are being controlled by a more powerful government. Africa has been one of the continents that has suffered the most devastating effects brought on by the colonization of their people, land, and resources by western powers. A form of colonialism still takes place today in Africa, through the practices of capitalism, cultural imperialism, and business globalization - in other words, through neocolonialism. African countries such as Zambia are having their resources taken and invested into the economies of countries such as Switzerland, New Zealand, and the United States of America.

Zambia is a landlocked country located in the central southern region of Africa, with Angola to the west and Zimbabwe to the south of its border. In Zambia, copper is plentiful. Copper is also a commodity to the world and is a significant factor in the global economy. However, foreign occupancy among Zambia’s copper mines is rampant. Every single copper mine in Zambia is owned by a western country, meaning that not a cent earned from the production of copper is given to Zambia, the rightful owners of this immaculate resource.

Over the past 10 years, 29 billion US dollars’ worth of copper has

been extradited from the lands of Zambia, with every cent going into the economies of westernized countries. Occasionally westernized countries give back to Africa in the form of “foreign aid”, however foreign aid is typically less than 1/10th of what these countries have taken from Africa in the form of

is to leave all that they know and love behind for the chance to start a new life on foreign shores in which promise boosted economies, prosperity, and opportunity. The same foreign shores that have been responsible for much of their very own misfortune back home in Africa. Many young Africans are



resources. This is one of the many forms of neocolonialism that takes place in the world today, particularly with African nations being exploited by the west.

Further commodities that Africa has been exploited for in the past and still is today includes precious gems, cocoa beans, and various precious metals. For many Africans of all ages, including the youth, this means poverty stricken lands and minimal opportunities to escape an insufficient lifestyle.

A popular method that many young Africans, including Zambians are taking

migrating to westernized countries in search of a high quality life that is given to so many non-Africans at the stake of African resources.

New Zealand is one of the nations that is slowly building communities filled with Africans who have left their homelands in search of better futures for themselves and their children. Not only has adjusting to new customs, traditions, and ways of life been a challenge for African migrants, but so has social acceptance from the ethnic majority of New Zealand. Many Africans have come to countries such as New Zealand, only



to find that in western countries the lifestyle that their homeland's resources have funded are not so easily accessible to African migrants or their children. New Zealand claims to be a nation of equal opportunity, however an entire generation of New Zealand-born youth of African migrants can attest to a different experience.

"People are surprised that we that we can speak English correctly. People always ask where we are from even though we were born here". This the response that of one of the three interviewees gave me when I asked him to describe his experience growing up in Wellington. He went on to state that a lot of white New Zealand born individuals treat blacks as though black is inferior to white. Despite the fact that he was born and raised in New Zealand, his existence in the country sounded like the experience of an outsider. Another young, first-generation African male that I had the opportunity to interview talked about different issues that he found to be not so uncommon around New Zealand.

"The media shows so much animosity towards the African population in New Zealand". The second young gentleman that I had the opportunity to interview felt that in the media, Africans are not accurately portrayed. He feels that Africans are commonly shown as unintelligent, uneducated, and almost

always violent and aggressive. Negative and inaccurate stereotypical portrayal of Africans in the media, along with bigotry and hate from other people can create misunderstanding and mistreatment of Africans on New Zealand soil.

I asked my final interviewee, a third generation African, what colonialism and neocolonialism meant to him. To him, colonialism and neocolonialism meant gentrification. I asked him how gentrification was affecting him. He gave me personal examples from his very own community: the inner-city Wellington neighborhood of Newtown. Just 10 years ago, the community of Newtown was largely filled with ethnic minorities: Polynesians, Māori, and Africans. There was actually a very significant amount of people of color in the area. Back then, Newtown was a great place for low-income dwellers to find an affordable place to live. It was extremely rare to find a white person in Newtown back then. Many whites considered Newtown a rough and dodgy place and did not step foot into the area. It was extremely rare to see a white person walking around the neighborhood. They preferred to live on the outskirts of town where they could have spacious backyards and big houses.

Presently, times are quickly changing. These days, convenience is an extremely desirable commodity that many people want the luxury of having.

Like any commodity, convenience can be bought and sold. This is when gentrification begins. Gentrification is the renovation and increase of property value in low-income areas to appease middle-class and upper-class income earners. Gentrification often leads to displacement of low-income and often ethnic minority residents. This is exactly what is happening to many inner-city ethnic communities globally and Newtown is no exception.

Before, the white middle and high income earners wanted to live far out and have lots of space to raise a family. But now, the next generation of white middle and high income earners want the convenience of inner-city living that comes with short commute times to and from work and numerous bars, restaurants, and entertainment quarters at their feet. The property demand has flipped. Now the demands for inner-city areas are higher, while rural and suburban living is less desired. To meet this demand and make money, the city has been slowly renovating Newtown and raising the rent and property value in the area, which displaces low income earners and people of color, forcing them to leave their neighborhoods for white, middle and upper class occupants.

"The whole objective is to move people far out", my interviewee adds. "It's [gentrification] aggravating because there are friends and neighbors who have been here for decades and are a part of the community but are forced to move because of capitalistic gains. People of color are the ones suffering".

The three young men that were interviewed all gave three very different examples of how colonialism and neocolonialism still impacts their lives today, but they all agreed on one thing. They all wished that there was more vocal presence of African youth in New Zealand. There is a great desire for more positive representations of the African population in New Zealand.

We, as African youth, have to come together for positive changes to happen. Young people are the future of the world and it is up to us to stand up to neocolonialism both abroad and on our own soil. In order for us to accomplish



this, we need to come together as a community and begin with small steps. A young man who is currently residing in Wellington has made a bold move to bring young African people in New Zealand together through the love of music. Ravi Ramoo is the founder of an exciting Facebook channel, ReelVibesCheck. ReelVibesCheck is based on diversity and has great and progressive things planned for its future.

Ravi, created this channel as a platform for the African youth to enjoy great music and to voice the issues that are plaguing their communities. However, the channel also welcomes young people from any background looking for a comfortable place to learn, meet new people, and enjoy music. With Africans coming together and other ethnicities getting to know and learn about one another, more harmony can occur.

Young people coming together is always a great thing. Although the African population have a separate history, there is a growing population being born and raised right in New Zealand. Each and every one of us play a large role in the making of a community. It is up to us, as young people to spread great influence and make positive changes one step at a time.

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- <https://www.facebook.com/reelvibescheck/>

3 young African residents of Wellington, who wish to remain anonymous



## Teenage Girls, Language, Social Media, Activism and Survival

*Ali Burns is a creative living in Wellington, placing herself with feminist values and a strong social conscience. Her creative profile includes completing her Masters in scriptwriting, directing music videos, web series, as well as creating and performing as part of the band prizegiving.*

Teenage girls in groups are rarely taken very seriously. They are often seen as silly and frivolous, and most likely gossiping about something vapid and uncultured. However teenage girls have more power over culture than they are given credit for.

The idea that teenage girls are vapid and useless saturates our culture. Films,

Books, Music and TV often paint the picture of the teenage girl being an airhead, a “mean girl”, or “not like other girls” (which basically means the dream girl of the writer). Recent examples include Paper Towns (which I’ll admit tries to address this but also in many ways fails at it), The Duff, The Princess and the Frog, P!nk and Blink 182. This is not to discredit these works of their worth, I merely wish to point out examples of media creating the troupe of “not like other girls”. When I was in high school I bought into this idea and looked at other teenage girls like they were silly and frivolous, and these were my friends. I had been so soaked in the culture that ridiculed teenage girls that I discredited my friends because of

it. I would try to avoid being like them because it meant that I was the girl who was not like other girls and that meant my emotions and thoughts were valid. It was a way to survive being a teenage girl.

This idea of being “not like other girls” discredits and silences young women, as they are never given the opportunity to take themselves seriously. They can’t raise their voices together in protest if they do not trust each other’s voices. However teenage girls have been silently and unconsciously protesting this culture for centuries, by creating their own culture and language in defiance, and by doing this they create a safer space for to exist in.

Teenage girls are the biggest creators of language, and have been throughout

history. "William Labov, observed that women lead 90% of linguistic change—in a paper he wrote 25 years ago. Researchers continue to confirm his findings."

(McCulloch)". The women who create the most language are young, this can be easily observed by examining where a lot of new slang and speech comes from. Young women's voices and their language should be celebrated. It is a way from them to survive, and it is a way for them to rebel against the society that persuades them that their voice is worthless.

An article on the Quartz by Gretchen McCulloch discusses that if we value Shakespeare so much then we should be applauding the innovativeness of the language that young women invent. Young women are condemned for the very thing that Shakespeare himself was applauded for. Katherine Martin head of US dictionaries at Oxford University press explains that if Shakespeare really was inventing so many words during each play then no one in the audience would have understood what was happening in the play, and that Shakespeare was in fact just recording the vernacular of the time. This vernacular comes mostly from young women.

As letters that were evaluated by Nevainen and Raumolin-Brunberg at the University of Helsinki showed that between 1417 and 1681, female letter writers were making far more changes in their speech than male letter writers.

Why are young women so good at creating new language and why do they do it if they are continually criticized for it? Beels and Wood explain that "some acts of youth agency can be seen as irrational, and some acts of resistance may not be conscious choices made by the individual". To be a young women within a society that is constantly discrediting you is not easy, so creating language which can't be understood by those who shame young women has got to be satisfying. Producing this

new language and using it within a safe environment can be a form of invisible activism that is an act to create social change, even though it is not conscious.

There is a public perception that youth of today are "apathetic compared to previous generations", however if we consider disrupting language as a form of activism then we can see youth as constantly performing a form of invisible activism as "activities of agency occur in spaces where a subject can stand, speak and be oneself; they are performances of identity just as much as they are moments of cultural creation" (Beels and Wood). Teenage girls do not have access to many spaces where they can stand and speak without ridicule. So creating speech and having it assimilate into everyday language is a way of performing their identity as well as creating social and cultural change.

This creation of language is evolving faster than ever due to the use of the Internet, where language among youth is shared quicker than ever before. Using the Internet as a platform for activism and survival is also a way to include youth and acknowledge them as more active in social change than they are recognized for. It is important to acknowledge when speaking of youth "apathy" in social activism that "some youth do not have access to the resources needed to do transformative agency, and others are permanently excluded from this position because of who they are and where they live" (Beels and Wood). The online community therefore is a safe space for young women who are not able to feel confident or physically be within a public space to speak out about causes they feel strongly about. Using social media and online communities to educate them and perform agency instead of doing so in a physical sense "may be in part a reaction to the limited spaces young people can occupy in physical spaces owing to the increased privatization and regulation of

public spaces" (Wyn and White). So it is complicated to criticize young women for being apathetic by not being physically present in activist communities.

A youth activism group in Auckland called Radical Youth used social media as a way to communicate with their members and followers, "young women from Radical Youth preferred to use social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook in their creation of a community of youth activists", when examined it was observed that "these social networking sites have generated few adult responses. In effect, these sites have appeared to be "no-go" zone for adults, effectively providing young women with a new space to connect with their peers away from the eyes of adults" (Beels and Wood). Which shows that older generations do not see these communities grow and the education and activism that is happening within them, which is why it is dismissed so much as a form of activism. Recently within New Zealand through social media many young women are calling out sexual abusers to warn other women, the ability to share this information is vital for many peoples survival, and having the ability to use a non-physical platform to do this also can protect the victims.

It is easier to access the knowledge we need to move forward and disrupt the patriarchy than it ever has been. Young women are sooner aware of the limitations that are put on them and therefore can sooner combat them. Using language and social media to create communities and culture is helpful for the survival and safety of young women, and even though this alone cannot combat the injustices that young women face we need to acknowledge that young women are more powerful in creating social change through these platforms than they are given credit for.

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# Decolonisation Love Song

*Huriana Kopeke-Te Aho is takatāpui activist, "artist" & survivor currently residing in Tāmaki Makaurau. They whakapapa to Tuhoe, Ngati Porou, Rongowhakaata, Te Ati Haunui-a-Paparangi & Ngati Kahungungu Ki Wairoa. Their special interests include decolonisation & indigenous resistance, prison abolition and talking shit about the illegitimate settler state.*

Decolonised love is a radical act

Decolonised love is a howl and a scream

Decolonised love is this:

some stories have more space to exist than others, some stories were destroyed completely, they took so much more than land.

I keep thinking about how arohanui is so different to i love you  
How tapu doesn't really mean sacred

How wairua doesn't really mean spirit

But we have to translate the feeling behind the language so that the colonisers understand.

These are hands that are always shaking

This is a body that never healed

but they tell me, my grief is so beautiful, we have never seen this type of heartache

please teach us, please teach us how to hurt like you

Sometimes I can't tell the difference between the hurt and the history, between a war cry and a mourning song, between my hands and theirs.

My mother said: always love your big feet, always love your big hands, always love your big head, they are so sacred.

Love your brown skin,

always.

Love your brown skin,

always.

Love your brown skin,

always.

I want to tell you

I want to tell you that when you lie with me, the weight of our histories seem a little less heavy, at least in this small moment and I am so grateful.

I want to tell you that there is something so beautiful about our brown bodies together.

I want to tell you that Aotearoa is a land full of ghosts but when I'm here with you, I feel a little less haunted.

Do you know how safe i feel with you?

Do you know how safe i feel with you?

Do you know how safe i feel with you?

When you touch me, it feels like rapture

When you touch me, it doesn't hurt to remember

When you touch me, my tupuna cry.

They whisper

"They are safe here with this one,  
they are safe here with this one,  
they are safe here with this one and we are so glad."

When we fuck it is a chorus, it is a small stirring wind, it is mourning for all the ones that came before.

It is all of our ancestors coming together.

We bury them here

in all our soft thighs, big hands, wide flat noses pressed to high cheekbones, brown skin on brown skin on brown skin on brown skin.

Our bodies together is a eulogy,  
our bodies together is an ancient love song,  
our bodies together is revolutionary,  
our bodies together is a small act of resistance.

I am safe here with this one,

I am safe here with this one,

I am safe here with this one and I am so glad.

You tell me my scars look like the confiscation lines.

They do to our bodies what they did to the land

You trace them and say: you are not theirs.

I am not theirs they had no right to claim me.

I am not theirs they had no right to claim me.

I am not theirs they had no right to claim me.

When we are together, I remember the old stories,

You are always calling me home,

Kei te aroha au ki a koe

(i love you)

Kaua e tangi

(Don't cry)

Kaua e haere

(don't go)

Haere mai ki konei

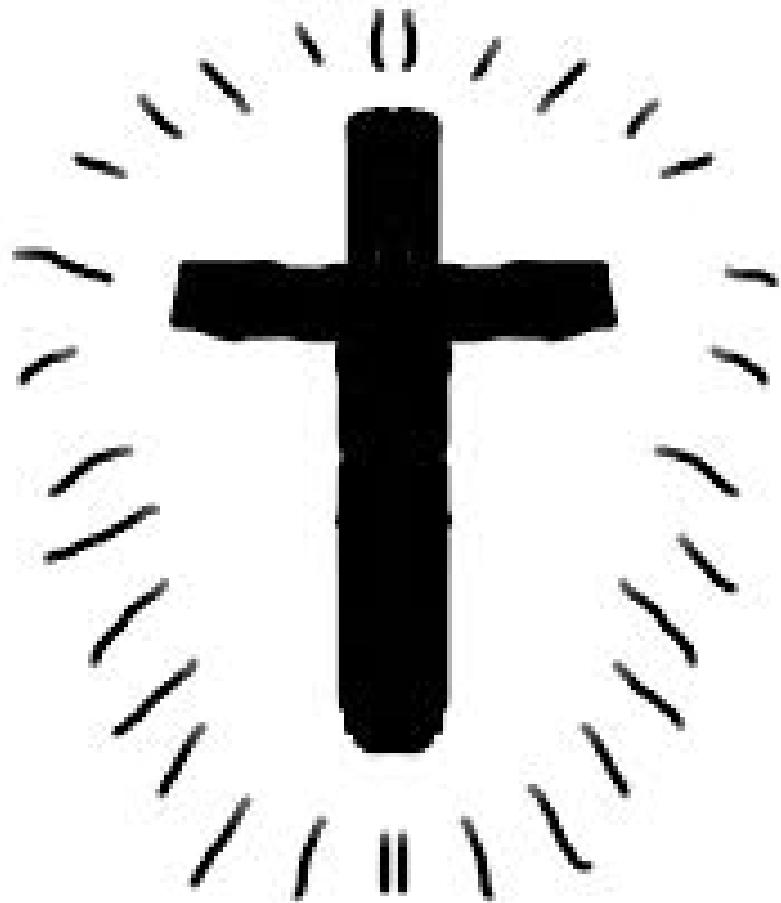
(come here)

Korero mai

(talk to me)

You are my manu tioriori, my songbird.

You are my Hina-keha, my light in the dark.



*when the colonisers came, they took so much more than land*

# Whose Future Is It? Xenophobia and Nationalism on the Left

*Tyler West is a student at Otago University who's been involved in left politics for around two years. He intends to do his postgraduate studies on a preliminary history of flaxroots and radical left politics in 21st century Aotearoa, while working on setting up free civic education classes for high schoolers to learn basic philosophy, political theory and NZ politics in the meantime. His current projects include a show on Otago Access Radio and a radical worker/student youth network by the name Students for a Just World, while also being a collective member of the Black Star Books anarchist infoshop.*

I entered the loose assortment of radicals who make up the New Zealand far left (or at least, left-of-parliament) in the aftermath of Occupy, which probably makes me among the newest batch of young activists. My first exposure to politics was being mistaken for an Occupier and (nearly) bottled while in school uniform. First protest I ever attended was against the GCSB in my last year of high school, and first campaign I was involved in organising was the TPPA movement. I spent every computing class doing absolutely no work whatsoever and pouring over every new report from the Arab Spring. Watched, as did a great many others, in absolute awe at the revolutionary movements which seemed on the verge of toppling tin-pot dictators and 'the corporations' (which I can now articulate as neoliberalism) alike. I remember the feeling of *something* surely changing soon, and the optimism it brought in the wake of the crash. For me at least, and I suspect others, that optimism lasted until around Gezi Park and refocusing from the Libyan to Syrian civil war. After that the current mood of defeat in

the face of each worsening new disaster set in. I start off like this not to build lefty credentials but to contextualise the political situation that the current generation of budding radicals grew out of. We grew into politics not only in the aftermath of the '08 crash, but also the disappointment of those who failed to overcome it. For those of us who were first exposed to radical politics in and after 2011, it is the memory of working towards something genuinely new that remains an underlying motivator. But in the process of going from starry eyed to actually participating in political debates and organising within the left, I've encountered more regression in the face of that defeat than progress.

It is out of this that I believe the disconnect between elements of the radical and progressive left, and typically fairly young far leftists stems. Overall, the primary opposition to neoliberalism which spurred the revolutionary movements in the West in 2011 is in fact a regression. A hearkening back to the protectionism of the welfare state, and to the varying levels of nationalism inherent in that. While apparent elsewhere on the NZ left, it most recently and clearly appears within the TPPA movement. I'll focus on the nationalist aspects of the movement, which dominate any internationalist tendencies in it. This visibly manifests in the overabundance of national flags and the branding of organisations with a distinctly nationalist focus, the slogan of It's *Our* Future often paired with posters depicting NZ with a Kiwi defending it from some menacing outside threat.

This isn't restricted to one movement, it is one of the most striking parallels between the TPPA and State Asset Sales movements. Both had significant participation from the radical and progressive left, which either did too

little or were simply too marginalised to overcome the Kiwi Nationalism which came to dominate both. More or less harmless, if vaguely irksome, by itself this works into a problem where the continuing expansion 'patriotic' rhetoric is left unchecked.

Last year's Fighting Foreign Corporate Control Bill, pushed by NZ First MP Fletcher Tabuteau, had support from various progressive and radical leftists at the time. It was pushed on the premise of *foreign* corporations being the problem, the word 'foreign' held as much negative connotations as 'corporation' in the discourse. When Lori Wallach came over from the US to go on a speaking tour with Jane Kelsey, I posed the question of whether a locally based company could exploit Investor-State Dispute Settlements to have just as much power to sue governments. While some assured that it wasn't possible and foreign corporations were the problem, Wallach informed the audience that it was possible and had actually occurred. In fact such an attempt had failed just a few months earlier. Philip Morris set up a branch in Hong Kong in 2011 to exploit the 1993 Australia-Hong Kong investment agreement, which it attempted (fruitlessly) last year.<sup>1</sup> While there was some dissent, not a huge amount of work was done to actually critique the foreigner focussed NZ First bill. What was certainly a time to make the case that we're working against an attack by the ruling class, or at least 'corporations', and not foreigners, was either missed or ignored.

Herein lies the problem, this discourse over foreign corporations serves only to reinforce the (sometimes vaguely, sometimes expressly) xenophobic protectionism of the old welfare state. The focus of the discourse has been fundamentally about specifically *foreign*

<sup>1</sup> Tobacco Giant Sues Australia, 28/7/2015, The West Australian.  
<https://au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/wa/a/29064155/philip-morris-sues-australian-government-over-plain-packaging-laws/>



threats to 'the average Kiwi battler'. The debate on housing hasn't been all that much better, lest we forget Labour's moronic 'Chinese sounding last names' position. Followed in turn by various erstwhile leftists simply supporting it as is, or at least excusing it for trying to solve the housing crisis. While certainly more heavily critiqued then the nationalist elements of the TPPA movement, I still noticed that comrades from a couple of progressive and radical socialist groups took a stance defending Labour. While I honestly didn't expect a unilateral rejection of Labour's position from the centre-left, I did find various people I knew on the socialist left that tried to defend Labour. Again, the same problems as before. Even though there was some (certainly much more in this case) critique of Labour's xenophobic stance on housing, there was likewise just as much indifference or even support for what is patently an underhanded hearkening to economic protectionism. Indeed I even find that the calls for rent

control, which find more comfortable footing on this end of the spectrum, tend to come primarily from self-identified revolutionary socialists. While certainly something which could help a fair amount, it's a fundamentally welfarist solution which relies on the state intervention and protection within the housing market. This would be fine if it were coming from people who earnestly came from a position of re-establishing the old welfare state. But it's the supposed revolutionaries who push it forward, while even more watered down variants are proposed the closer to the political centre you get. Without some broader idea as to how simple rent controls flow into fully socialised housing further down the track, there's no claim to socialism involved. It's simply a retreat, a regression back into relying on the welfare state without a broader attempt at explaining why or critique of what it was before.

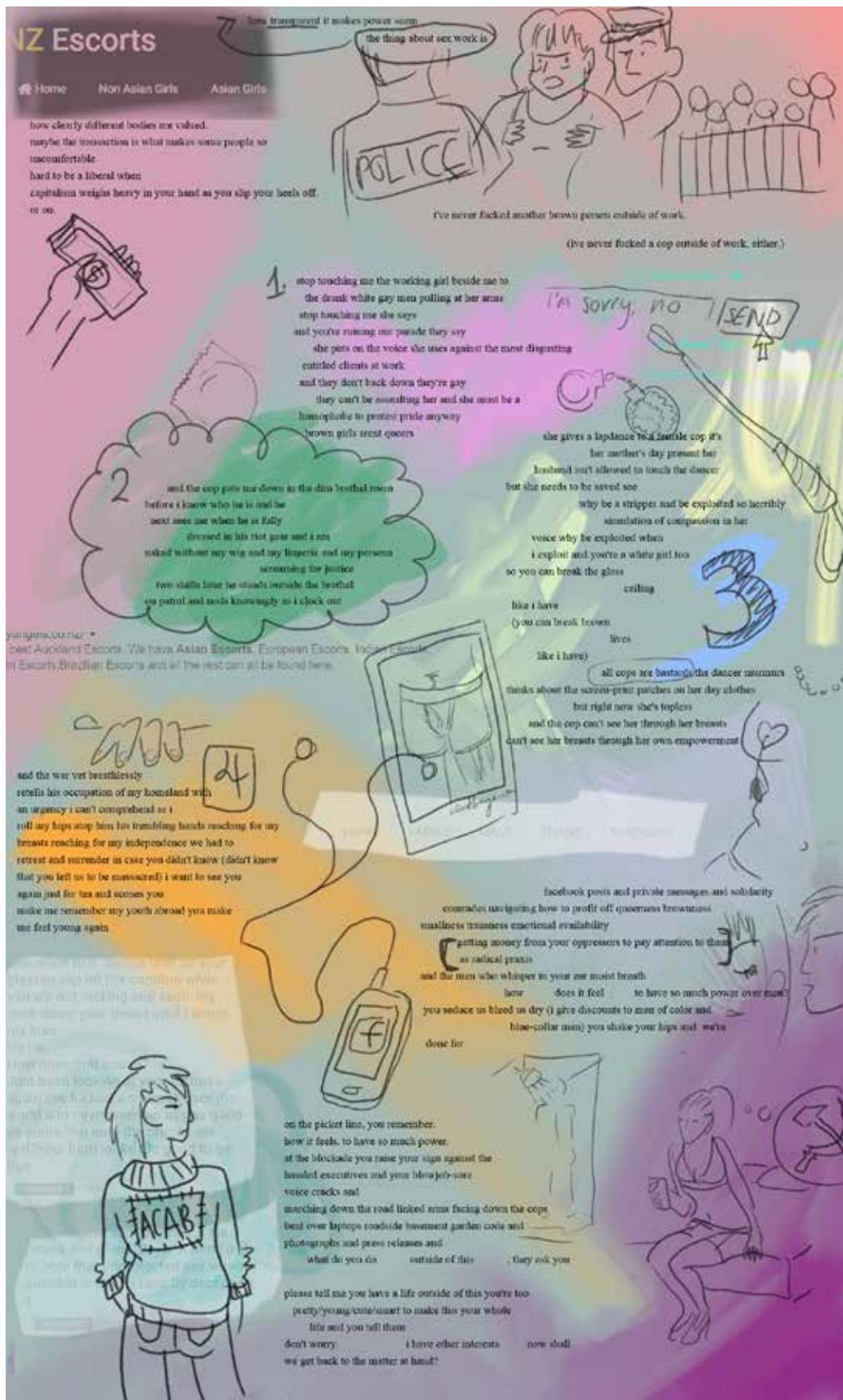
And this is the case with all of the above.

There seems to be an overwhelming give up feeling inherent to this. That we're fighting on these political fronts just to break even, and not to strike forward. I find more purchase suggesting that we take an internationalist perspective and instead of trying to defend what we still have actually fight on the grounds we can make things better among random folk who turn up to rallies than many activists I'm usually around. For me, and I assume others, giving up on the project started in 2011 isn't an option and we can't just regress into a default position of defending the welfare state. In a recent interview on Radio NZ Noam Chomsky mentioned that even during the darkest days of the Depression there was an optimism that it had to get better afterward, something lacking in the aftermath of the GFC.<sup>2</sup> While for those who saw the radical upsurge in 2011 and the defeat afterward may feel this, for us who started in 2011 there is no going back. The awe and enthusiasm of that year will remain.

<sup>2</sup> Noam Chomsky on the death of the American Dream, 6/5/2016, Radio NZ  
<http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/ninetoono/audio/201799712/noam-chomsky-on-the-death-of-the-american-dream>

# WHAT DO YOU DO // OUTSIDE OF THIS

Ki Foster



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# Beyond the Ballot Box

Brodie Fraser

Political participation is an important facet of democracy. In recent years there has been a rise in the study of alternative forms of political participation. There are a number of reasons for this, however the main one is global trends of declining political participation. This is said to be a “crisis of Western democracy,”<sup>1</sup> which has led to studies exploring alternative forms of participation that are less institutionally recognised. One of the main subsets of alternative participation is online participation. Online political participation covers a range of actions including online voting, online campaigning, and social media use. Both Members of Parliament (MPs) and the general citizenry use social media as a way to participate in political life, hence the need to take separate looks at online political campaigning and everyday social media use. As these forms of participation are growing and evolving, there are a number of gaps in the existing thought. One of the most obvious gaps is how to translate these forms of participation into engagement with formal political institutions. Another gap relates to online voting. Voting is regarded as the pinnacle of political participation; online voting is then the main form of online participation we think about. However, much of the literature about online voting focuses on why it will not work; we fail to look for solutions to the issues online voting poses. There is also a gap when it comes to the ways in which politicians use social media platforms such as Instagram. Social media is an important tool

in promoting policy, personality, and a party’s brand, so it needs to be studied in depth.

While political participation is synonymous with voting, it does include other forms of engagement. It encapsulates voting, petitions, protests, and engagement with Members of Parliament, amongst others. As Riley, Griffin, and Morey note; “Political engagement has traditionally been thought of as a set of rights and duties that involve formally organised civic and political activities (e.g. voting or joining a political party).”<sup>2</sup> These forms of participation are institutionalised, and are recognised as being legitimate. Online voting is a form of political participation, while social media use is a less institutionalised form of participation.

Online voting is a major part of debates about increasing participation. Vesnic-Alujevic argues that the internet has the potential to attract citizens and widen participation.<sup>3</sup> The internet can then be seen as an equaliser, and a platform through which diversity can be increased and upheld. Estonia was one of the first nations to adopt online voting, and studies have shown as online voting increased throughout the country, so too did voter turnout.<sup>4</sup> Online voting is shown to increase youth turnout, as the majority of young people have now grown up with the internet as an integral part of their lives.<sup>5</sup> There are also arguments against the adoption of online voting. Lust found that online voting in Estonia reinforces socioeconomic biases in voting as online voters tend to be more urban centred,

well educated, and richer.<sup>6</sup> He argues Estonia should abandon online voting due to technological security threats, and the inequities of the medium.<sup>7</sup> One of the main arguments against online voting is to do with security; it is seen as being too easy to hack into and there are concerns that voting from one’s own home could result in family and friends pressuring voters to make certain choices.

Much of this literature focuses on the reasons why online voting should not be adopted. While this is a necessary and valid stance to take, there is a lack of people who are attempting to address and find ways around the issues with online voting. So much of our way of life now relies on the internet that it does not make sense to merely dismiss online voting. Instead, we must work to find creative and lasting solutions to current issues with online voting. This will result in an open and robust form of political participation. It is important we address how these issues can be rectified, rather than restating the issues with online voting.

As the internet becomes ever more important in day-to-day life, politicians are focussing more of their energy in campaigning online. The internet and social media are simple and fast ways for politicians to communicate with large numbers of citizens. Alongside this, online campaigns are often cheaper than offline ones. Facebook can be used to easily spread information and engage people in events politicians host and attend. New Zealand-based research found that while MPs think they use Facebook for two-way conversations with the public, posts on their pages suggest

1 Brendan McCaffrie and Sadiya Akram, “Crisis of Democracy?: Recognizing the Democratic Potential of Alternative Forms of Political Participation,” *Democratic Theory* 1, no. 2 (2016): 47, doi: 10.3167/dt.2014.010205.

2 Sarah Riley, Christine Griffin, and Yvette Morey, “The Case for ‘Everyday Politics’: Evaluating Neo-tribal Theory as a Way to Understand Alternative Forms of Political Participation, Using Electronic Dance Music Culture as an Example,” *Sociology* 44, no.2 (2010): 346, doi: 10.1177/0038038509357206.

3 Lucia Vesnic-Alujevic, “Political Participation and Web 2.0 in Europe: A Case Study of Facebook,” *Public Relations Review* 38, no. 1 (2012): 466, doi: 10.1016/j.pubrev.2012.01.010.

4 Aleksander Lust, “Online Voting: Boone or Bane for Democracy?,” *Information Polity* 20, no. 1 (2015): 316, doi: 10.3233/IP-150373.

5 Lust, “Online Voting: Boone or Bane for Democracy?,” 466.

6 *Ibid.*, 320.

7 *Ibid.*

8 Karen Ross, Susan Fountain, and Margie Comrie, “Facing Up to Facebook: Politicians, Publics and the Social Media(ted) Turn in New Zealand,” *Media, Culture and Society* 37, no. 2 (2014): 251, doi: 10.1177/0163443714557983.

9 Peter Hall and Rosemary Taylor, “Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms,” *Political Studies* 44, no. 5 (1996): 948.

they predominantly use the platform to broadcast information.<sup>8</sup> This suggests that MPs need to reconceptualise the ways they are using social media to ensure it is being used to critically engage with their followers. Twitter is a means for MPs to engage directly with their constituents and the public as a whole; it is frequently used to interact with the media and citizenry. Finally, Instagram can be used to convey a particular image politicians wish to present. For example, many use Instagram as a way to show the 'behind-the-scenes' aspects of a politician's job. Social media is becoming an integral facet of life as an MP; it enables greater communication and breadth of campaigning.

As social media trends are constantly evolving, it can be difficult for the literature to keep up to date. One of the largest gaps in current literature is to do with how politicians use Instagram. It is being used by both politicians and political parties alike; parties use it as an extension of their party brand, and MPs use it to share visual snippets of their life as a politician. It is becoming an important part of campaigns and requires a greater focus on how it is used, the demographics it is reaching, and the influence it has on campaigns. Instagram can be used to cultivate a personal brand. It would also be beneficial to analyse MPs' social media use through a social institutionalism lens. Social institutions "influence behaviour by providing the cognitive scripts...that are indispensable for action..."<sup>9</sup> This approach would provide a useful conceptualisation of

social media use. We already see MPs being prevented from posting on their social media platforms on election days due to the influential nature of such posts, which suggests we need to closely examine the impact of social media use in the political sphere to ensure it is being utilised in the best ways possible.

Social media is an important facet of political participation. It has grown exponentially in the past decade and become a pervasive part of life. As forms of social media evolve, so too do the ways in which it is used. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram can all be used as conduits of political participation. Each platform is used in different ways; thus political participation varies across them. Much political debate now takes place online, with a large portion of this occurring on Facebook.<sup>10</sup> Studies have found Facebook users participate in debates and share political information with their networks.<sup>11</sup> This is a new and simple means of opening up political dialogue. Velasquez and LaRose found that social media serves as an alternative form of collective activism, which contributes to the engagement of young people.<sup>12</sup> Social media has the ability to increase individual and collective political participation.

Social media can significantly alter the way we conceptualise political participation. It has rapidly become a ubiquitous part of life. There is, however, a lack of literature about whether or not social media based political discussions result in an increase in institutional forms

of individual political participation, as well as the intricacies of how various platforms are used to engage in politics. As Fenton and Barassi argue, "all creative human activity has the potential for political transformative capacity but to understand how this potential can be translated into a reality requires an appreciation of enduring social and political structures..."<sup>13</sup> We must look at how and why current political institutions are so enduring, and find ways to translate this to online forms of participation.

Political participation is a necessary aspect of any functioning democracy. New technologies are changing the way we participate in politics, so activists, political scientists, and policy creators must ensure they work together to institutionalise them. The three main facets of online participation are online voting, social media as a campaign platform, and social media as a form of political participation. As the field is relatively new, there is a lack of comprehensive theory and literature about it. There are gaps that need to be addressed. This includes; ensuring we have the tools to translate online participation into institutionalised participation, focusing on how to remove barriers to online voting, and studying the intricacies of how social media is used in politics. In addressing these, political scientists will further institutionalise online forms of political participation and provide theoretical frameworks for public policy creators to be able to create comprehensive policy that addresses the necessity of online participation.

<sup>10</sup> Vesnic-Alujevic, "Political Participation and Web 2.0 in Europe: A Case Study of Facebook," 467.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Alcides Velasquez and Robert LaRose, "Youth Collective Activism Through Social Media: The Role of Collective Efficacy," *New Media and Society* 17, no. 6 (2014): 914, doi: 10.1177/1461444813518391.

<sup>13</sup> Natalie Fenton and Veronica Barassi, "Alternative Media and Social Networking Sites: The Politics of Individuation and Political Participation," *The Communication Review* 14, no. 3 (2011): 194, doi: 10.080/10714424.2011.597245.

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# We Can Go Further: Alternatives to Our Political System

*Charlie Prout is a 22 year old student completing a BA in Sociology and Political Science. He has an interest in communicating big complicated issues to the public in simple ways.*

Youth cannot get involved in economic activism without a dialogue of an alternative system. I sat down with Dr Dylan Taylor, Lecturer in Social Policy and Sociology, and Dr Greta Snyder, Lecturer in Political Science, at Victoria University of Wellington to discuss alternatives to neoliberalism and how activists can make anti-neoliberal activism appealing to youth.

What is the current economic system? How does it hurt people?

**GS:** The general tendency is towards privatisation, greater efficiency, deregulation, all of those components. One of the really interesting things about the current economic climate from the work perspective, there has been this introduction of flexibility to labour. The flexibility you see today is thought to be a good thing [but it is] to the detriment of a lot of the working population.

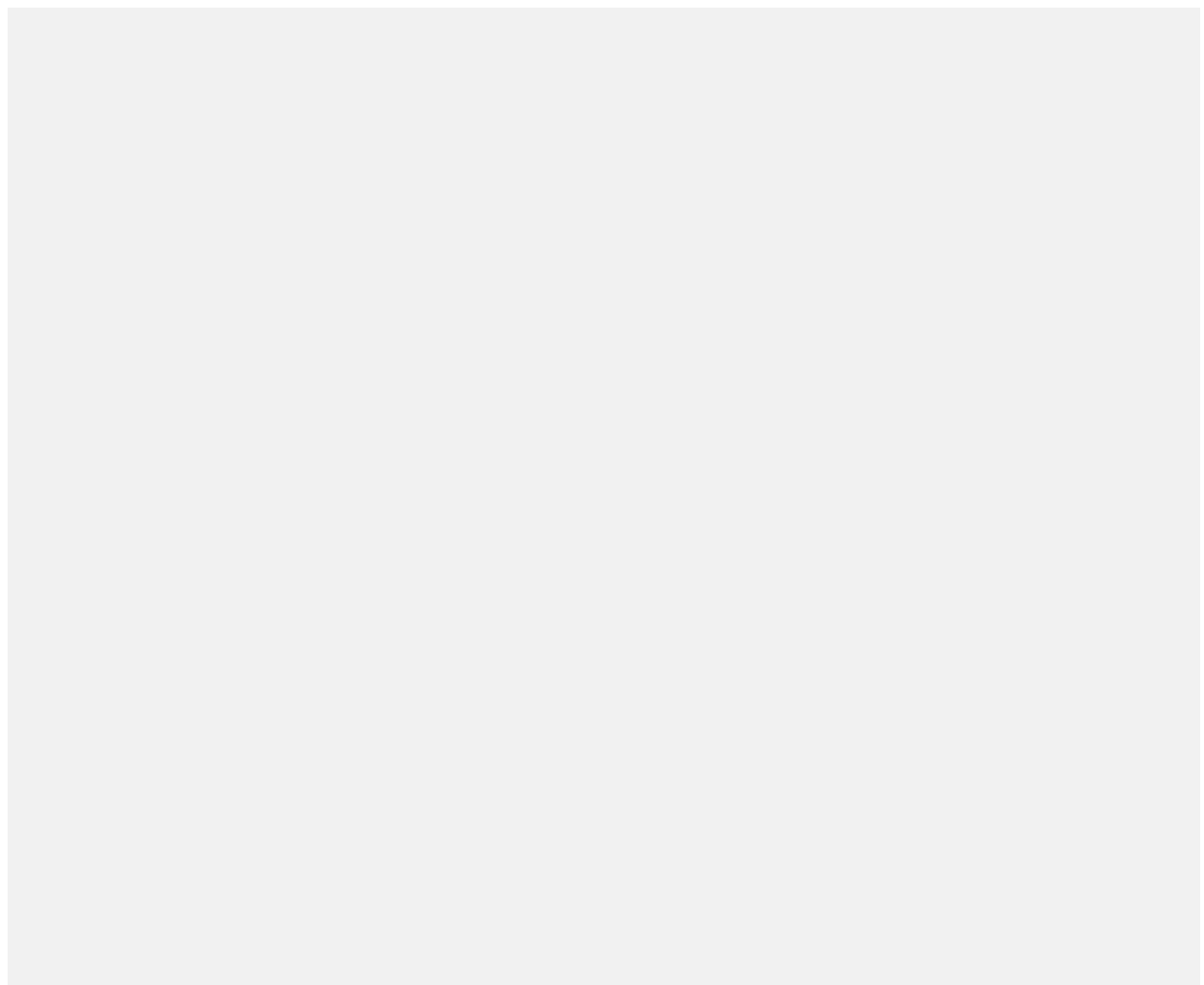
**DT:** The current economic system is, of course, a capitalist one. Capitalism is by definition, for the vast majority, a system based on exploitation. And this exploitation can take place in areas you wouldn't normally think. For instance, when you're engaging with your peers on social media you're also generating information that companies like Facebook or

Twitter can sell on and make a huge profit from. The genius of capital lies in its ability to extract value from all facets of our lives.

What are the alternatives to neoliberalism? How do we create a counter narrative?

**GS:** It's got to be done at a lot of different levels... Occupy Wall Street is a great example...of the potential for a large-scale rejection of the kinds of forces [that perpetuate capitalism]. At the local level, there is all sorts of great stuff that is being done... On the more radical side, you have groups like the Zapatistas who are like "opt out, we will create our own world with emphasis on group autonomy, and self-sufficiency, and sustainable development".

**DT:** First we need to ask if we want an alternative that still sits within the capitalist paradigm? If so, then we can turn to historical alternatives such as Keynesianism, and retool them for the current moment. As seen in the bailouts given to financial institutions following the global financial crisis of 2007, states still have the capacity to undertake significant interventions in the economy. Although considering the deepening levels of inequality and homelessness "developed" countries face, this was not an intervention that benefited the majority of people. So a Keynesian style approach would see the state intervene to do such things as create more jobs, build social housing, and regulate capitalism to curb its worst



excesses. A counter-narrative in this sense could run along the lines of “we’ve done it before, let’s do it again.”

More exciting, however, is to think how we might move beyond capitalism. Historically the alternative has been called “communism”. The catchphrase of communism is “from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs” – it’s a profoundly egalitarian idea. We each do our bit, what we can, and in turn we’re guaranteed a dignified life. One of the justifications for capitalism is that it fosters innovation and, in turn, improves living conditions for us all over time. But we’re now faced with declining living standards in Aotearoa and elsewhere, along with the wider issue of environmental catastrophe, and innovation is stifled because the most important thing seems to be making profits for the rich. So how about this for the basis of a counter-narrative: “capitalism is holding us back, we can do so much better!”

How do we develop activism around these alternatives that get youth involved?

**GS:** A resignification of activism is necessary. There are lots of discourses out there that paint activists as virtuous [and promoting them]. It is fighting against economic forces, but [also] against social forces that are really harmful to people. Youth in New Zealand are facing a particularly fraught moment in terms of mental health. A lot of people feel really

alienated...by the forces that face them - going to university, paying for university, finding a job. To say “hey this isn’t just your problem, this is our problem and you are not alone” is a pretty attractive thing.

**DT:** A starting point is developing an understanding of the systems and relations of power we live in. Not just capitalism, but patriarchy, racism and colonialism (and I’m sure there’s more). We need to think about the ways these intersect, and how these “big issues” influence the conditions of our day-to-day lives. So this is a negative process, in a way, asking: “how am I exploited, or oppressed, or held back?” – and also, “how do I exploit, oppress, or hold others back?” This involves critical self-awareness and dialogue with others.

More positively, we can ask what aspects of our everyday lives might, if amplified, form the basis for a better society? Think about the way you treat the ones you love, the way you cooperate with your workmates, how you feel when you’re doing something creative. To scale this upwards, however, we need to build enduring connections with one another. Organisation is needed. And if it’s systemic change we’re after, then we need to find ways of linking different projects and struggles together. We need to think big. Have a vision. Realise our communities, this country, the world as a whole, can change for the better.

# Why you should get involved in Fightback

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1. Constitutional transformation based on Tino Rangatiratanga, Mana Motuhake and workers power. Tangata whenua and community co-ops to operate as kaitiaki over public resources.
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3. The benefit system to be replaced with a universal basic income.
4. Full rights for migrant workers.
5. Opposition to all imperialist intervention and alliances, including New Zealand the state's participation in military occupations and the Five Eyes agreement.
6. No revolution without women's liberation. Full funding for sexual violence prevention and survivor support, free access to all reproductive technologies. For socialist-feminist solutions to the marginalisation of all gender minorities, within the movement and in society.
7. For an ecosocialist solution to climate change. End fossil fuel extraction, expand green technology and public transport.
8. For freedom of technology and information. Expansion of affordable broadband internet to the whole country. An end to Government spying on our own citizens and on others. End corporate copyright policies in favour of creative commons centred on producers and users.
9. Abolish prisons, replace with restorative justice and rehabilitation.
10. Free health-care and education at every level, run by those directly affected. In healthcare; remove inequities in accident compensation, move towards a health system based on informed consent, opposition to "top-down" efforts to change working people's behaviour. In education; full public funding for all forms of education and research, enshrining education in te tiriti and te reo.

## Contact

### Auckland

Daphne  
027 220 9552  
[daphne@randomstatic.net](mailto:daphne@randomstatic.net)

### Wellington

Ian Anderson  
022 385 8682  
[ian.ndrsn@gmail.com](mailto:ian.ndrsn@gmail.com)